

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 IO-13 DODE-00 L-03 PA-01 SSO-00
NSCE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 /082 W
-----012952 281512Z /45

O R 281421Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7835
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY SANA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 1435

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PEPR, ET, SO, DJ, US
SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN SUSPICIONS OF US MOTIVES IN HORN OF AFRICA

REF: A. DJIBOUTI 434, B. DJIBOUTI 367, C. ADDIS ABABA 1382

SUMMARY: RELIABLE REPORTS HAVE REACHED EMBASSY THAT SOME
EPMG OFFICIALS SEE FACT THAT EMBASSY DID NOT IMMEDIATELY
PROTEST MOFA MAR 25 STATEMENT ALLEGING US COMPLICITY TO
ENABLE SOMALIA TO ANNEX DJIBOUTI AS EVIDENCE THAT CHARGES
ARE TRUE. THIS CABLE ANALYZES THIS REPORT AND CONSIDERS
OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MAY HAVE AROUSED ETHIOPIAN
SUSPICIONS THAT HER INTERESTS IN DJIBOUTI MAY BE JEOPAR-
DIZED. EMBASSY ALSO ENDORSES EMBASSY DJIBOUTI'S RECOMMEN-
DATION FOR US OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENT ON DJIBOUTI.
END SUMMARY.

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USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE HAS PROVIDED EMBASSY WITH
FOLLOWING INFORMATION (PARAS 1-3):

1. EETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MOFA) OFFI-
CIALS EXPECTED A FORMAL US PROTEST TO BE DELIVERED
ON MAR 27 OVER ETHIOPIAN HERALD ARTICLE ALLEGING

US COMPLICITY WITH SOMALIA IN PLANNED ANNEXATION OF DJIBOUTI. BERTHANE DERESSE, HEAD OF THE MOFA AMERICAN DEPT, COMMENTED THAT THIS WOULD BE THE CASE IF THE CHARGES WERE NOT TRUE. (SOURCE COMMENT: MOFA OFFICIALS SIMPLY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE FAILURE TO PROTEST IMMEDIATELY IS ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN ADMISSION OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHARGES, OR, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT DELAY IN US REACTION CAN BE EXPLAINED BY THE SLOWNESS OF US BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES.) BY THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS MAR 27, THE GENERAL CONSENSUS AT MOFA WAS THAT SINCE THE CHARGES WERE NOT FORCEFULLY AND OFFICIALLY DENIED, THEY MUST BE TRUE. PROTEST DELIVERED LATER WILL PROBABLY HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON THIS CONSENSUS.

2. MOFA OFFICIALS ARE ALSO CONVINCED THAT ASST. SECY. MOOSE SIGNED A "SECRET" MILITARY PROTOCOL WITH SOMALIA AND BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL BE BORNE OUT BY CONTINUED SOMALI INTRANSIGENCE OVER ITS IRREDENTISM AND BY APPEARANCE OF WESTERN ARMS (EVEN IF FROM SAUDI ARABIA OR IRAN, ETHIOPIANS BELIEVE THAT THESE DELIVERIES COULD NOT BE MADE WITHOUT US CONNIVANCE) IN SOMALIA.

3. MOFA AND DIRG MEMBERS ARE NOW HEARING STORY TO THE EFFECT THAT THE "MANY" SOMALI TROOPS WHO WERE BOTTLED UP AT AYSHA HAD BEEN PREVENTED BY ETHIOPIAN
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TROOPMOVEMENTS FROM RETREATING TO SOMALIA SO THEY RETREATED TO DJIBOUTI WITH PERMISSION OF THE FRENCH. THESE SOMALIS ARE STILL IN DJIBOUTI AND WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRO-SOMALI GOVT THAT WILL EVENTUALLY SEEK FEDERATION WITH SOMALIA. IN THE EVENT OF SUCH AN ATTEMPTED COUP, ETHIOPIA WOULD IMMEDIATELY INVADE DJIBOUTI.

4. EMBASSY DOES NOT ACCEPT AT FACE VALUE ALL OF SOURCE'S REPORT. FOR EXAMPLE, WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT PMAC, OR MOFA ON PMAC'S BEHALF, WOULD TOSS OUT ONE OBJECTIONABLE OFFICIAL STATEMENT ACCUSING US AFTER THE OTHER, AS THEY HAVE DONE PERIODICALLY SINCE DECEMBER, ONLY TO SEE WHETHER US PROMPTLY PROTESTS, USING LATTER CRITERION AS INDICATOR WHETHER CHARGES THEY HAVE COOKED UP HAVE ANY VALIDITY. RATHER, EACH OF THESE STATEMENTS IN EMBASSY VIEW REPRESENTS INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS OF CURRENT IMPORTANCE TO ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL INTEREST THAT ELEMENTS WITHIN LEADERSHIP, HOSTILE TO ANY ETHIOPIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES, WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ALL ETHIOPIANS BELIEVE. TO THAT EXTENT, OUR FAILURE TO REACT PROMPTLY

DOES SERVE TO GIVE THESE HOSTILE ELEMENTS FURTHER PRE-
TEXT TO CLAIM THE VALIDITY OF THEIR ACCUSATIONS. IN
PAST, WE HAVE PROTESTED SOME OUTRAGEOUS CHARGES, OTHERS
NOT, SOMETIMES PROMPTLY, SOMETIMES ONLY AFTER SEVERAL
DAYS. NONETHELESS, AS IN CASE OF MOFA JAN 14 BLAST
AGAINST PRES. CARTER'S JAN 12 PRESS CONFERENCE,
FONMIN HAS EVEN REFUSED TO RECEIVE MY PROTEST. IN
PRESENT CASE, IN ABSENCE OF AUTHORIZATION TO PROTEST
MOFA STATEMENTS AS REQUESTED REFTEL (C), I TOOK OCCASION
OF DINNER PARTY MAR 27 TO REGISTER DISPLEASURE OVER
STATEMENT TO MOFA EUROPEAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR WENDWOSSEN
HAILU AND TO POINT OUT AGAIN OUR PREVIOUS ASSURANCES
TO MOFA PERMSEC DAWIT THAT PRESIDENT'S REMARKS ON
SOMALI ASSURANCES REGARDING RESPECT FOR NEIGHBOR'S
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BOUNDARIES, APPLIED TO DJIBOUTI AS WELL.

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5. ALL IN ALL, THEREFORE, I SEE A POISONOUS GAME BE-
ING PLAYED WITHIN EPMG, WHICH OBVIOUSLY HAS SOME HARM-
FUL EFFECT ON OUR CREDIBILITY AND ON ETHIOPIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS US IN GENERAL. MORE DECISIVE THAN OUR PROTESTS OR LACK THEREOF, HOWEVER, MUST BE OUR INFLUENCING SOMALIA TO MAKE KIND OF PUBLIC ASSURANCES THAT WILL ASSUAGE KENYAN AND DJIBOUTI APPREHENSIONS OVER THEIR SECURITY VIS-A-VIS SOMALIA AND GIVE OAU MEMBEERS DIPLOMATIC AMMUNITION WITH WHICH THEY CAN WORK IN LAGOS TO OVERCOME INTRACTABLE ATTITUDES WHICH ETHIOPIA MAY DECIDE TO ASSUME THERE.

6. PUBLIC SILENCE TO DATE AS TO RESULTS OF MOOSE VISIT TO SOMALIA, PARTICULARLY WHEN COMPARED WITH IMMEDIATE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM WASHINGTON AFTER AARON VISIT TO ETHIOPIA IN FEBRUARY, SOME OF WHICH CONCERNED MAT-
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TERS OF SOME SENSITIVITY TO EPMG, COULD WELL HAVE CREATED SUSPICIONS WITHIN MOFA HERE THAT SOME KIND OF MILITARY DEAL WAS AGREED ON IN MOGADISCIO, AS SUGGESTED PARA 2 ABOVE. EMBASSY ASSUMES, HOWEVER, THAT SOME OF THESE SUSPICIONS WILL BE MOLLIFIED WHEN PROMISED WASHINGTON ANNOUNCEMENT ON MOOSE VISIT SURFACES THIS WEEK.

7. ON DJIBOUTI, EPMG HAS GOOD REASONS TO BE WARY, SINCE POLITICAL SITUATION THERE IS FRAGILE AT BEST, AND THERE ARE INDEED NUMEROUS FORCES WORKING AGAINST ETHIOPIA'S INTEREST. FACT THAT US IS NOT ONE OF THESE FORCES IS IRRELEVANT, SO LONG AS EPMG PERCEIVES US AS BEGINNING TO ASSUME NO. 1 PROTECTIVE ROLE FOR GSDR, AND SO LONG AS SOME EPMG LEADERS AND THEIR FOREIGN COUNSELORS ARE LOOKING FOR ANY OPPORTUNITY TO PLACE US IN BAD LIGHT. NEITHER SOMALIA NOR ETHIOPIA HAS EVER HAD CLEAN HANDS WITH DJIBOUTI IS CONCERNED, AND ANY OF CONTINGENCIES SPELLED OUT BY AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI IN RECENT TELEGRAMS COULD WELL HAPPEN. WE THINK KIND OF STATEMENT RECOMMENDED IN DJIBOUTI 367 MAKES GOOD SENSE. IT WOULD STRENGTHEN GROD POSITION AND WOULD ALSO BE HELPFUL TO HAVE ON RECORD HERE, WHETHER OR NOT EPMG IS INCLINED TO BELIEVE US.
MATHERON

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